

# V I B R A T I O N S

NEWSLETTER OF COLORADO SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAFBLIND

**Serving Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss,  
Their Families, and Service Providers**

**Winter 2001 EDITION**

*This is an edited version of the original newsletter. Only the articles pertinent to transition have been maintained as resource information. If you copy any of this information, please give credit to its original source.*

## **Common Misperceptions in Transition Planning**

- #1** ***The right to quality, community services is guaranteed to every individual with a disability.***  
Educational programs are guaranteed for students. However, community services are not guaranteed for adults even though adults may be eligible for services. This means there may be long waiting lists. These waiting lists are due to limited funds or state priorities for moving individuals from institutions to community settings.
- #2** ***The transition process means getting a job.***  
A job is important, but others areas need to be considered during the transition process. Some of the areas may include: living arrangements, relationships and friends, leisure time, homemaking, education, health concerns, transportation, estate planning, guardianship, advocacy, and financial needs.
- #3** ***Identifying transition service need for good transition planning will guarantee a successful transition from school to adulthood.***  
Identifying transition service needs is an important part of the process. However, making sure transition goals and objectives are met through the IEP is what really counts. Too often, transition service needs are reviewed at annual IEP meetings only to find that nothing has happened.
- #4** ***Team members work well together during the transition process.***  
Bringing a group of people together does not mean they will automatically work as a team. For example, team members may not understand each other's roles, functions, goals or terms. Education team members may not be aware that vocational rehabilitation members and services primarily focus on employment and are time-limited services. Vocational rehabilitation team members may not be aware that educators should take an active part in job preparation.

**#5 *It is easy to make decisions as long as team members keep the person's best interest in mind during the transition process.***

Group decision-making is not easy because what different team members consider important will depend on personal beliefs, values, and experiences. For example, one team member supports a person's choice to work in the community. Another team member believes that adequate supports are available in a sheltered workshop and not available in the community.

**#6 *Choices about services are limited to what is available in the local community.***

Often, a person's choices are forgotten when team members choose from existing services without considering new possibilities. For example, all team members agree the person enjoys physical work outdoors in quiet, non-crowded places. However, the only work option presented at the team meeting is assembly work in a crowded, noisy, sheltered workshop. Team members did not search for other possibilities based on the person's preference.

**#7 *Team members have all the answers to all of the questions that may arise during the transition process.***

Meeting a person's needs and preferences means finding people who can help. No one team member can possibly have all the answers to all of the questions. For example, the person's family members are interested in meeting future financial needs through estates planning. Other team members may not have the information, but they can provide resources to the family to get additional information.

**#8 *The monies to cover costs of services for adults with disabilities are from one government source.***

Funds for adult services come from a variety of sources. Creating a total funding package often is complicated because monies are provided by various government agencies including but not limited to Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Security Administration (SSA), Mental Health, Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD), and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Each funding source has different application processes and eligibility criteria.

**Check out** the CDE webpage on transition. Look for the button that will take you to transition resources in Colorado.

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/Transition&SecondaryServices.htm>

# Services Provided Through IDEA Do Not Carry Over To Adulthood

From *Pacesetter*, by Patricia Bill, ã 1999.

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When Jamie, a young man with multiple disabilities, turned 22, his family experienced an unpleasant surprise. The special education rules upon which they had relied for nearly two decades no longer applied. Jamie and his parents were suddenly scrambling to find services to support work, continued learning, and community inclusion. Each service came from a separate agency that did not always collaborate-or cooperate-with others.

“Parents of young adults with significant needs are often astonished to find that the adult service system does not operate the way the school system does under IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act),” said Cathy Urbain, PACER coordinator in transition, supported employment, and Social Security.

“Under IDEA, local school districts are both the funder and the provider of services. There is one written plan-the IEP (Individualized Education Program)-and one appeals process that is the same across all special education services,” Urbain continued. “The adult system is much more complex. Therefore, families will want to be sure an appropriate transition plan is in the student’s IEP.

“The complexity of the adult system and the lack of legislation like IDEA that requires needed services to be provided mean that families should be sure that the student’s IEP includes an appropriate transition plan. In addition, the family may wish to begin making arrangements and interviewing funders and providers several years before the young adult graduates,” warned Urbain. “The individual with disabilities and her or his family should visit and interview available service agencies, then select those that best meet the person’s needs.”

Even young adults who are excellent self-advocates may need their parents “to keep all those systems afloat,” said Urbain. “The sad reality is that by the time your child with a disability leaves high school, you, as a parent, may be becoming tired. Yet, you can’t coast as an advocate. You must stay involved,” said Deborah Leuchovius, coordinator of PACER’s Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA) project and parent of a teenager with spina bifida.

“I really appreciate it when Freddy’s school therapists call to remind me to follow-up on something we discussed,” said Leuchovius. “With his many needs, it is difficult to stay on top of everything. When he leaves the school system in just a few years, however, we will have to assume even greater responsibilities as ‘case managers’ of a multitude of services.” Freddy and his parents must coordinate speech services, physical therapy, further education and training, medical care, and social and recreation activities. Eventually he will need transportation, employment, and housing services.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that transition planning begin when a student turns 14 and services that help a young adult prepare for life after high school are to be in place when a student is 16, even if graduation is not planned until age 21 or 22. Adult service representatives should be included in IEP transition meetings. IEP’s must address planning and services beginning at Grade 9 or at age 14. “Begin planning early so you won’t be overwhelmed or unprepared when your student leaves school,” advised Leuchovius.

## **Transition Outcomes for Students who are Deafblind**

The word transition has become synonymous with change for many persons with disabilities today. According to data over the last decade from the National Technical Assistance Consortium (NTAC), approximately 600 individuals who are deafblind reach age 22 each year. They leave traditional educational programs and enter the world of adult services. Though parents, educators, and services agencies have tried to prepare them for the future, this process of moving to adult service is anything but simple.

As these young adults with deafblindness move from school to work, no one agency or organization is in a position to offer all of the needed services (Rachal, 1995; Petroff, 1999). Further complicating matters is the fact that although educational services are guaranteed for student with disabilities; employment and community services are not (Steveley, et. al, 1995; Steveley & Everson, 1995).

The need for more training and support in transition planning is supported by both state and national data. The data from Indiana's State Improvement Plan and the IDSE monitoring report paints a pessimistic picture of school transition planning and outcomes for students with disabilities. IDSE monitoring reports on LEA's indicate that districts have difficulty in meeting transition services needs and often fail to obtain student input in transition meetings. As a result, students with disabilities have a higher unemployment rate than high school graduates without disabilities. Thirty-nine percent of the sample was unemployed and less than 50% who were employed had full time jobs. These statistics are even higher for those with significant disabilities.

On a national level, students who are deafblind have been found to follow these same trends. In transition studies, the results showed that a majority are not working or are underemployed, living with their families with little hope for independence, and participating in few community activities (Wagner, 1993; Everson, 1995; Petroff, 1999). Only 18% were working for pay, representing an 82% unemployment rate. Fifty percent of these individuals have no friends; only 38% spend time visiting friends, and fewer than 13% go to parties or on dates. Only 6% are living independently (Petroff, 1999).

In addition, despite the federal and state mandates supporting transition, planning and coordination of effective transition services in Indiana is made difficult by the number of agencies involved. There are many different and overlapping services areas. The IDSE organizes the 297 school districts into 106 special education planning districts with 66 funding entities in seven administrative "roundtable" areas. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation divides Indiana's 92 counties into 5 regions with 25 regional offices, while the Developmental Disabilities section has eight regions. Finally, the Department of Workforce Development has 16 economic development regions. In the end, the number of people, procedures, and problems confronted during transition planning continue to make the prospects for a successful outcome extremely challenging (Steveley, Houghton, Goehl and Bailey, 1995).

# Employment for Persons who are Deafblind:

## You Can Make a Difference

Americans with disabilities still face a sharp gap in securing jobs, education, transportation and in many other areas of daily life, including recreation and worship. In 1998 The National Organization on Disability (NOD) commissioned a landmark Louis Harris Survey, which verified this information. "At a time when the US unemployment rate is at an historic low and there is a crying need for workers, it is astounding to learn that the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled workers remain so wide, said NOD President Alan A. Reich. "America must remove attitudinal and physical barriers in the workplace and all other areas of life."

For persons who are deafblind, this gap is frequently even larger. Data specific to persons who are deafblind indicate that they have an 82% unemployment rate and nearly 50% claim no real friendships. A recent article from the Helen Keller National Center reported the Harris Survey's suggestions on what Americans could do to close these gaps for persons with disabilities. Suggestions include:

- 1) Employers can re-examine their practices and seek out and hire people who are deaf-blind, or have other disabilities. It only costs, on average, \$300, to accommodate a worker.
- 2) Community groups, service and religious organizations can adopt plans to include people with disabilities.
- 3) Recreational, cultural and sports groups can ensure full accessibility and encourage participation of people who are deaf-blind, or have other disabilities.
- 4) Americans can recognize people with disabilities as positive contributors to their communities.
- 5) Americans can extend a hand as a volunteer, support service provider or intervener to a deaf-blind individual in their neighborhoods, at the local gym, food market, church/synagogue, or local school system.
- 6) Americans can encourage the media to continue to ensure that people with disabilities are portrayed fairly as individuals in public and private life.

(Adapted from "You Can Make a Difference" press release, Public Relations Department, Helen Keller National Center, 111 Middle Neck Road, Sands Point, NY 11050.)